

## Sickness Absence Policy

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## Sickness Absence Policy

ELT manager	Principal and Chief Executive
Responsible officer	Head of HR & Organisational Development
Date first approved by BoM	28 June 2017
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Next Review Date	April 2023
Equality impact assessment	30 April 2020
Further information (where relevant)	

Reviewer	Date	Review Action/Impact	BoM
LG	June 2017	Replaces Managing Absence policy	
VF	May 2020	Additional information added regarding: Employees with Disabilities Updated Sick Pay Entitlement Medical Appointments Accumulation of Annual Leave Whilst on Sick Leave Annual Leave Carry Over Absence for medical and dental appointments	

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# 1. Purpose

West Highland College UHI (the College) is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of staff and promoting attendance at work. The Policy aims to maximise attendance while recognising that there are occasions when staff may not be able to attend work due to their ill health.

The purpose of this policy and associated procedures and guidance is to provide a clear framework for reporting and recording sickness absence and outlines the fair and consistent management of short and long-term sickness absence across the College. It also ensures that staff have the support they need from their managers, as well as access to support services.

There are two types of sickness absence as follows:

- Short-term absence defined as absences lasting less than 21 calendar days
- Long-term absence lasting 21 calendar days or more

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sickness Absence Guidance document that accompanies this policy.

# 2. Scope

This policy applies to all West Highland College UHI staff. The principles of this policy will apply to staff on probation, however, absence concerns will be raised and considered as part of the probation process and not the formal Attendance Review Meeting process as outlined in the Sickness Absence Guidance document.

Other authorised absences (e.g. special leave, annual leave, maternity, maternity support or parental leave) are covered by other appropriate WHC UHI policies and procedures.

# 3. Policy Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Provide staff and managers with a standard process and consistent approach for managing, recording and reporting sickness absence;
- Promote a positive culture of attendance;
- Minimise sickness absence levels and help facilitate return to work as soon as possible;
- Offer support and assistance to staff experiencing ill-health;
- Ensure the College acts in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner when dealing with sickness absence issues; and
- Establish the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, including staff, managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health in relation to sickness absence.

Staff who are unable to attend work due to ill-health are required to notify their manager of their absence by following the sickness absence reporting procedure, as set out in the Sickness Absence Procedure.

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Managers should be supportive of staff when managing sickness absence and ensure that it is addressed in a caring and sensitive manner and with a fair and consistent approach, balancing the needs of individual staff with those of the College.

The College will adopt a case-by-case approach when working with staff who are absent from work due to ill-health, and, where advised, modify the approach to the specific health circumstances of each individual.

Guidance and advice should be sought from the HR Department for any specific concerns regarding the application of the policy. Further advice on managing sickness absence is provided in the Sickness Absence Guidance document.

The policy seeks to ensure that sickness absence matters are dealt with sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of the individuals concerned.

Every effort will be made to assist an employee who does not meet acceptable levels of attendance; however, it may be necessary to take formal action under The College's Disciplinary Procedure where this is not resolved.

Abuse of the Sickness Absence Policy may result in disciplinary action being taken, including dismissal.

All actions being considered or implemented will take into account the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (1998).

### Employees with Disabilities

The College wishes to assist employees with a disability to realise their full potential and provide them with the same career prospects and promotional opportunities that are available to all employees. In addition, the College is committed to assisting with the retraining and rehabilitation of those who become disabled during the course of their working life.

The College will make all reasonable adjustments that may be necessary in order to facilitate a return to work for employees with disabilities, and to make appropriate adjustments where these are identified during the course of their employment.

### Entitlement to Sick Pay

Service at Commencement of Absence from Duty	Full Allowance for a period of	Half Allowance for a period of
Less than 1 year	5 weeks	5 weeks
1 year but less than 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
2 years but less than 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
3 years but less than 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
5 years or more	26 weeks	26 weeks

### Sickness during annual leave and office closure periods

If an employee falls sick during a period of authorised annual leave or an office closure period, they may be entitled to reclaim the leave entitlement. If such a circumstance occurs, they should notify their manager **on the first day of sickness**. On their first day back at work, they must submit a certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner confirming the details and dates of their illness. The certificate should be dated from the first day of their illness, as retrospectively dated certificates will not normally be accepted for the purposes of reclaiming annual leave, other than in exceptional circumstances.

### Medical appointments

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Arrangements covering medical and dentist appointments should not be recorded as sickness absence unless the appointment requires a whole day's absence.

### **Accumulation of annual leave whilst on sick leave**

Employees who are on sick leave continue to accumulate annual leave but do not accrue sick leave entitlement.

Under the Working Time Regulations, an employee cannot take sickness absence and a period of annual leave simultaneously but can take advantage of whichever is the more favourable. Therefore, an employee on long-term sick leave can request that they be regarded as taking a period of annual leave rather than a period of sick leave. This may result in an employee receiving normal holiday pay in place of sick pay, where this is more favourable.

Employees away from work owing to sickness can give notice that they wish to take a period of annual leave even though they know it is likely that they will continue to be sick during that period.

### **Annual leave carry over**

Where an employee has been on long term sick leave, and has been unable to use their annual leave by the end of the annual leave year, only outstanding **statutory** leave will be carried over to the next year.

### **Absence for medical and dental appointments**

With the exception of emergency situations, employees are expected to make arrangements to see a doctor or dentist for non-elective procedures outside normal working hours, or where this is not possible, at times that will cause the least disruption.

Where it is necessary for such appointments to take place during working time, the employee must notify their line manager at least 24 hours in advance of the appointment and where possible should show the Line Manager the appointment card.

Special consideration will be given for paid special leave if the employee is disabled and requires additional or extended leave for appointments relating to the disability.

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of staff, managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health are explained below:

### **The Manager:**

- Ensures staff are aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, and what is expected of them via the induction process and day-to-day management
- Monitors and records sickness absence on Cascade in a timely manner
- Conducts and records return to work discussions following a period of absence due to sickness and ensures that staff provide the appropriate documentation
- Addresses sickness absence concerns when they become known and seeks to resolve these at the earliest opportunity in a prompt, confidential and sensitive manner and ensuring consistency and fairness
- Leads and directs informal discussions and formal Stage 1 and 2 Absence Review Meetings
- Ensures that any reasonable adjustments that are recommended by either the doctor or Occupational Health are given due consideration and implemented (where appropriate) in a timely manner

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- Liaises with the HR Department to refer staff to Occupational Health as appropriate
- Ensures appropriate levels of communication with absent staff are mutually agreed and maintained
- Seeks guidance from the HR Department for cases other than routine sickness absence management
- Ensures that in dealing with sickness absence cases compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (which incorporates the key provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended in 2005) and the College's associated policies such as the Equality & Diversity Policy are adhered to
- Ensures all incidents/accidents at work are accurately recorded in line with the accident reporting procedures
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### **Staff:**

- Looks after their own health and minimising their absence from work
- Keeps their manager informed about health issues that might affect their ability to work and/or attendance
- Follows the sickness reporting procedures by informing their manager when they are unable to attend work due to sickness or if they are taken ill or are injured while at work
- Provides relevant and timely self-certification and/or Statement of Fitness for Work ('Fit Note')
- Co-operates with their manager during the absence management procedures and answers concerns raised
- Attends Occupational Health or other appropriate medical specialist if reasonably requested to do so
- Maintains regular contact with their manager throughout any period of sickness absence, especially if the absence is long-term
- Makes every effort to attend medical and/or dental appointments outside their normal working hours if possible. Where this is not possible, makes every effort for such appointments to be scheduled for the beginning/end of their working day or lunch time
- Understands that not complying with the relevant statutory rules relating to sickness absence may affect eligibility for sick pay and that, following investigation and dependent on circumstances, disciplinary procedures may be instigated
- Attends return to work discussions and formal Absence Review Meetings as appropriate
- Works with their manager to support the implementation of reasonable adjustments to working arrangements practices and procedures to deal with the challenges created by disability, ill-health or injury

### **Human Resources:**

- Provides sickness absence reports to managers
- Provides advice and guidance on health and sickness matters to managers and staff
- Advises and supports managers on all aspects of the operation of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, helping to maintain consistency in its application
- Attends formal meetings and provides procedural advice
- Works with Occupational Health and other support services on case management
- Provides information and support to managers and staff where an individual is or becomes disabled

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### **Occupational Health:**

- Provides advice and guidance on health and sickness matters to managers, staff and HR
- Following a management referral, meets with the staff member and provides a confidential assessment of their fitness for work and, with their consent, prepares a written report to the manager/HR Department
- Provides advice and recommendations on steps and/or adjustments that might assist rehabilitating a staff member back to work following a period of sickness absence
- Provides advice on whether a staff member's health problems may be related to work or the working environment and any actions that may prevent further problems
- Provides advice in relation to any long-term concerns about a staff member's fitness to work, which may need further action to be considered such as permanent readjustments to the role, redeployment support or ill-health retirement
- With the staff member's consent and where indicated, obtains additional information from the staff member's doctor, medical consultant or other treating specialist
- Provides a confidential support service to staff

## **5. Related Policies**

Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Policy  
Stress Management Policy

## **6. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if necessary.